

Mr. High-Mind

at his editors and leader-writers, until it suddenly dawned on him that all this excitement, all this shouting, signified nothing; that he was not in a position to affect what was happening in any way.²⁶ Then his spirits drooped; self-pity and sometimes petulance overcame him, and his little court had to find means of restoring his spirits.

If Lord Beaverbrook, alone or in combination with Lord Rothermere, made a poor showing against Mr. Baldwin, that master of political strategy, he was more successful when the conflict was with his fellow Press magnates. In the struggle for circulation which a popular newspaper must constantly wage, attempts had been made to get readers by offers of gifts, free insurance, and other benefits. To put an end to this ruinous competition, an agreement was reached between the national dailies to renounce all free gift schemes, but proved no more adequate as a safeguard of peace in Fleet Street than agreements between the nations to renounce aggression have as a safeguard of peace in Europe. An unexpected offer by the *Daily Herald* to provide registered readers with a set of Dickens's novels, in sixteen volumes and worth four guineas, for eleven shillings, led to the reopening of hostilities on a more lavish scale than before.

When it was complained that the *Daily Herald* offer amounted to a contravention of the agreement to renounce free gift schemes, Mr. Elias (shortly after the abdication of Edward VIII, raised to the peerage as Baron Southwood) contended that the set of Dickens's works was worth four guineas was just

a figure of speech', and that a profit could be made on the sixteen volumes at eleven shillings. Thereupon, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *News Chronicle* offered their readers sets of Dickens's

²⁶ cf. the Astronomer in *Rasselas* whose madness took the form, of believing that he 'possessed the regulation of weather, and the distribution of the seasons. . . . The sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by my direction; the clouds, at my call, have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command; I have restrained the rage of the dog-star, and mitigated the fervours of the crab/